

just a few hours earlier and fortunately it was not run over by any vehicle.

Palm civets are omnivorous and their diet includes varieties of fruits (Prater 1980, THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS, Mumbai). We give below the list of items identified from the stomach of the civet.

STOMACH AND COLON CONTENTS OF BROWN PALM CIVET

Species identified		No.
In stomach*		
<i>Embellia</i> sp.	fruit pulp	1
<i>Elaeocarpus munronii</i>	fruit+intact seeds	1
Snail with shell	Invertebrates	2
Earthworms	"	1
Unidentified undigested matter		3
In colon:		
<i>Embellia</i> sp.	intact seeds	1
<i>Rubus</i> sp.	seeds	20
		29

* a few sand particles were also found.

The list shows the omnivorous nature of the animal and the presence of intact seeds in the colon indicates that the animal can disperse seeds. It also shows that it is not necessarily arboreal; this is indicated by the presence of earthworms and *Rubus* seeds which are available at ground level.

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3. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE TIGER *PANTHERA TIGRIS* IN SIKKIM

The first positive occurrence of tiger in Sikkim was reported by Col. F.M. Bailey in 1924 from Karponang, east Sikkim, where its pugmarks were seen. It had been killing ponies and yaks. Shooting was attempted unsuccessfully but the animal was seen by the beaters. It was then reported to have crossed Lagyap (3500 m) between Gangtok and Natu La and reached Tsomgo (3800 m), killing livestock on the way and a yak at Tsomgo. When driven off the kill it crossed a 4000 m ridge into the Yelli Chu valley and thence into the Dikchu valley where it was killed (Bailey, 1939 *JBNHS* 41: 166).

The first recorded sighting of the tiger in Sikkim was in 1934 by the Political Officer Mr. F. Williamson, who sat up over a mule kill at Lagyap and actually saw the animal (Batty, 1939 *JBNHS* 41: 165). It was speculated that the tiger, probably a pioneer from the lower elevations either returned or went over the Natu La into

Chumbi valley after being shot at. To corroborate the latter hypothesis a male yak was found killed there, with fang marks on the throat.

In April 1938 Lt. Col. F.H. Lister came across a fresh tiger skin at Lachung in north Sikkim (Lister, 1938 *JBNHS* 40: 553). In December 1994 during my visit to Lachung, I came across the skull and lower jaw of a tiger in possession of an old hunter Mr. Thendup Lachungpa and photographed it. He reported the skull to be about 40 years old. Another local person also reported sighting of a large male tiger in the forest below Yumthang around 50 years ago.

The route of the tiger from east Sikkim towards the north has been documented by Mr. Chezung Lachungpa, Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Circle for the last 20 years, from sporadic local reports of sightings, kills, compensation paid by the Government and

presence of pugmarks. Plaster casts were lifted from the prints whenever located and are now in the State Forest Department office at Gangtok. Usually the reports were of only one animal which probably came in from adjacent West Bengal or Bhutan to occupy suitable territory.

Today we have probably lost the tiger in Sikkim. The lush jungle routes traversed by the tiger are either no longer in existence or under

heavy military occupation. Occasional reports of tiger from Melli, south Sikkim usually turn out to be leopard (*Panthera pardus*) kills.

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4. EARTHWORM IN THE DIET OF LEOPARD *PANTHERA PARDUS*

The panther will kill and eat anything. It can overpower with safety, cattle, deer and monkeys, the smaller beasts of prey and large rodents like the porcupine. Its bill of fare is extended to include birds, reptiles and crabs (Prater, 1965; THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS). A leopard has a great tendency to digest each type of flesh including some cartilaginous parts but is unable to digest hair, hooves and bones which are left as such in its droppings.

A general study of scats was carried out wherever they were found, in Chail Wildlife Sanctuary and the University Campus (Nauni). Undigested bone, hair, hooves and even green parts (leaves) were found in droppings at Chail. But the most interesting finding in the scats of leopard is of the earthworm* which was collected from the University Campus near the dairy farm in December, 1996.

Earthworms are cold blooded annelids and nocturnal in habit, living in burrows during the day but coming out at night in search of food. Numerous earthworms were seen in the morning hours along the roadside from the University Library to the dairy farm in winter before snowfall (mainly Nov.-Dec.). Still, we could not get a satisfactory reason for the consumption of earthworms by leopard. It is known that a leopard can devour and digest each type of flesh but it is a mystery why earthworms were not digested by the leopard.

*Photograph — not of printable quality — Ed.

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5. WILD WATER BUFFALO *BUBALUS BUBALIS ARNEE* IN DIBANG VALLEY DISTRICT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(With one text-figure)

The Asiatic wild water buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* Linn. *arnee* Kerr, is among the globally threatened species. The bulk of the known population occurs in India. An account of its status in northeast India, the only stronghold of the species, is given in Choudhury (1994). In the report, occurrence of a small and scattered population in Dibang Reserved

Forest (RF) of Arunachal Pradesh has been mentioned.

Here I report the past and present status of the species in the entire Dibang Valley dist. of Arunachal Pradesh, as ascertained during field visits between 1992 and 1994.

Till the early 1970s, wild buffalo was widespread all over the lower areas of Dibang